NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF SPEECH
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS 60201

DEPARTMENT OF RADIO, TELEVISION, AND FILM

January 6, 1981

Dear Amos,

I am trying to find out more information about the 16 mm narrative film LAST SPRING (circa 1954, b&w, silent, about 27 minutes). I hope you can help me, because I believe the film deserves rediscovery as a significant gay male film of the 50s.

I saw a print of the film recently at the Institute for Sex Research (the "Kinsey Institute")at Indiana University. It had a title, but no credits of any kind. The director of the Institute was able to tell me only that the print was donated by an elderly man who had been active in New York's literary and artistic circles, but no further information was available. I do not know the relation of the anonymous donor to the film.

> Short description: titles; LAST SPRING. This story started in Strawberry Hill. The camera was the only witness. About 10 minutes of shots of two young men (20's, clean-cut, athletic looking) on the New Jersey farm of one of them. They are shown outdoors, with farm animals, walking and talking together, some hugging and petting. Indoor shots of them looking out a window, washing dishes together, etc. The lover leaves by train for NYC. Transition sequence and dream sequence--rest of film. The New Jersey man waits for mail but none arrives, he wanders alone, lies down amidst fallen blossoms. He dreams/fantasizes being at Atlantic City, on the boardwalk. His lover is shown riding a merry-go-round, trying on a hat, laughing at a mechanical clown. The New Jersey man seems to head for NYC. Night sequence: the lover is shown on the subway, near Times Square, in a bar drinking alone; the New Jersey man appeals to him to leave without effect. The lover is ejected by two bartenders. Day sequence: in a park or wooded area the New Jersey man sees his lover who appears and disappears a number of times. Finally the two are united and seem to be back on the farm.

I would guess the film was made by someone (several people?) with a strong visual sense or training who was familiar with experimental film of the time: the film uses in-camera effects such as superimposition, very effective jump cutting, subjective camera, unusual camera angles, and so forth. I would speculate that the maker(s) did not

have traditional film school training because of some elements that would be considered flaws by conventional standards (the camera is always hand-held, some shots are over-exposed without apparent reason).

I am interested in writing a critical article about the film, which I think is an interesting example of narrative independent film of the 50's, and a film that deserves discovery as a pioneering gay film. It's sad to think that the maker(s) felt he had to remain anonymous at that time. I hope to find out who made the film, and anything else about it. If I can contact the filmmaker, I'd like to see if a print could be obtained for screening this spring at a gay and lesbian film festival planned by Chicago Filmmakers, a center for screening independent film. LAST SPRING should be better known, and widely screened today.

You can write to me at Northwestern or reach me by phone (w: 312-492-7317, h: 312-252-6616).

Sincerely,

Chuck Kleinhans

Chuck Kleinhans
Assistant Professor
Radio-TV-Film

CK:cs

Hope you know about this or can furnish some leads. Chuck

February 5, 1981

Chuck Kleinhans
Assistant Professor, Radio-TV-Film
Northwestern University
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Dear Chuck:

I have your round robin letter regarding LAST SPRING. It certainly sounds fascinating and worth rediscovery. However, I have absolutely no information about it. Nor have I seen it. Have you tried Vito Russo, c/o Christopher Street magazine, New York?

Incidentally, did you ever receive my comments on the avant-garde piece? I did not hear from you. What happened with the piece?

Best,

Amos Vogel
Professor of Communications

AV/pws

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